

July 20,

2020

Dear Honorable Michael F. Urbanski,

Greetings! My name is Joyce Davis. I am a teacher in the Danville Public Schools in Danville, Virginia.

I am writing in reference to Matthew Ferguson. I have known this young man since his birth. Generations of both families have attended the same church as well as lived in the same communities. Mathew was raised to be an honest and dependable individual. He was in the Boy Scouts at an early age. He played little league sports. His grandmother's hope was to keep him occupied with positive activities to keep him out of the streets.

Matthew was very active in church. Throughout his life he sang in the youth choir and Jr. Usher Board. He also led the Praise Team. Children loved him. He loves children and is quite the jokester! He is well loved in the church community.

Unfortunately sometimes hanging out with the wrong type of people can make you a follower to fit in. That is what happened to Matthew Ferguson. He made wrong choices while trying to please and be accepted by the wrong type of people.

It is my hope that you take this in consideration when you are deciding Matthew's fate.

Sincerely,
Joyce Davis

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Barry Mayo and I am writing this letter on behalf of Mathew Ferguson. I am the former Case Manager for Virginia CARES Re-Entry program of Danville, where he learned how to become a productive citizen, focusing on stabilization of employment and career choices. I have known Mathew for over 20 years, he and his family lived in the same neighborhood that I lived in; his grandmother Mrs. Jesse Ferguson was a dear friend to my mother who helped raise Mathew from a five year old child until adulthood, giving him a loving family and a good home. Mathew was a very energetic young man growing up; he loved playing outside and with friends in the neighborhood. As an adult he took a turn at making bad choices which accounted for spending time in and out of jail as well as supervised probation. I am an advocate and firm believer that the Virginia prison system is the best at rehabilitating individuals who have committed a crime. In reference to his past mistake I truly feel that Mathew can bounce back and live a productive life when given the chance. He has a strong and supportive family that will provide him the support so that he can learn to become a productive citizen.

Sincerely,

Barry P. Mayo

Honorable Michael F. Urbanski, United States District Judge

% Mary E. Maguire, Assistant Federal Public Defender, Office of the Federal Public
Defender,

701 E. Broad Street, Suite 3600, Richmond, Virginia 23219

July 7, 2020

To the Honorable Michael F. Urbanski:

My name is Lynnette A. Thomas and I have known Matthew Ferguson since he was born for his mother and I are great friends. As Matthew and my son grew up together with Matthew being the older brother, I relied heavily on the input from Matthew's grandmother, Mrs. Jesse Ferguson in keeping me abreast in the sport-related opportunities available for our sons as a measure of keeping them busy and out of harm's way. I also served as Matthew's Homebound Teacher when he was placed on Homebound Instruction when he was in high school. Admittedly, Matthew has stayed in my home many times with me calling Ms. Jesses to inform her of his whereabouts. We are family. Therefore, I know the family and Matthew very well. Still now, and from time to time, Matthew still calls me.

Matthew is a young man who may have went astray but comes from good stock, has had great upbringing, has had the luxury of a wonderful family environment coupled with ongoing spiritual support from his church family as well. However, Matthew, like so many other young African American young men, are products of growing up lacking a father or other strong male figure in the home which places/ed him in a great disadvantage from the very beginning he took his first breath.

Matthew is a very friendly and embracing young man who likes people and loves to engage in conversation. He will talk to and befriend anyone who gives him a chance to get to know them. Nonetheless and at times, it has appeared that Matthew has failed or come short in his ability to decipher who not to associate with. With strong male figures being lacking in his life, I believe that Matthew was looking for a bond that he couldn't find within his family for after his grandfather died, no man remained in his life. Did I fail to say how important bonding is for the psychological, emotional and social development of children, especially boys?

All that I can attest to is that Matthew has always been respectful to me and there was nothing he wouldn't do for me; in fact, he became and remains my son's big brother who often would help me keep my son on track. MC, as we call him, is not a bad person, truly not a "thug" nor does he pretend to be. What has happened to MC breaks my heart for I can only empathized

in how his grandmother and other family members must feel with him being incarcerated and now with him being sentenced soon. Matthew is not a bad kid, but a kid who made friends with those not having the same upbringing and character that he truly has. He is a good kid who made some mistakes. I ask, "Who hasn't made mistakes in life?" The MC that I know, and love is indeed generous, helpful, considerate, friendly and indeed, talkative. There is so much that awaits him in life for his last employer still, 2 years later, would hire him back according to his grandmother-this says a lot about who MC truly is. We make mistakes in life, we all do, and MC is no different.

MC will call me just to talk. He misses his true friends and those he knows care for him. I am tearing as I type this character letter for, I can only sympathize with the family in his incarceration and future sentencing for it breaks my heart, as well. I now am wiping my tears because I am feeling only some of the pain and anguish the Ferguson family has felt now for 2 years; it hurts me too. He's a good child who made bad decisions and sometimes decisions made willingly and or unwillingly, can put one in a bad and dreadful circumstance. This is where MC finds himself today.

My wish and prayer for Matthew Ferguson is for him to get released with time served. His punishment: Community service in some format talking to young boys and teenagers about how decisions, right or wrong, will, can, most certainly, affect one's future. Or better yet, a job placement within the J&D courts system such as being a part of the Divergent Program that is designed to redirect young men who are vulnerable to crime due to their specific conditions in life: poverty, single parent household, drug and gang involvement, unemployment, etc.

I ask the court to consider my plea, for this is what this letter represents, my pleas for Matthew's release while speaking on behalf of Matthew's character. I am his Aunt Lynnette and you don't have to reach deep to see, feel and receive his love. I am most certain that his character and simply just who he is sticks out like a sore thumb when he is compared to his fellow cell mates. Everyone, I am sure, sees something different that is unique and good about him. Matthew is a good kid who made some bad mistakes.

Please consider seriously and without prejudice my character letter on behalf of Matthew Ferguson.

Sincerely submitted,

Lynnette A. Thomas, Ed.S.

Special Education Teacher-Danville Public Schools

Family friend

Character Reference Letter for Courts in Rectitude of Mr. Matthew Ferguson

Dear Honorable Michael F. Urbanski, United State District Judge:

Hello. I am writing in reference to Mr. Matthew Ferguson, who is appearing before your court due to his crimes. Ms. Ferguson, Matthew's grandmother asked me to write a character reference letter, but the truth is that I was already planning on doing so before the request. I feel strongly about Matthew, and about his future, and I want to try to make you feel the same way.

I am Rev. Ronald Lee Pridgen. I am a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ and mental health counselor. I am a Man-Kind-Project fellow (<https://mankindproject.org/>). I am a former teacher and education administrator who has served in the education field of Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and High School, and the Collegiate level of higher learning. I came to know the toddler, Matthew, while I served as an associate minister at the same church Matthew attended in 1998. I had the pleasure to be Matthew's Sunday school teacher, Summer Vacation Bible School teacher, and I have served in other youth auxiliaries in the church which Matthew participated during his youth at Bennett Memorial Missionary Baptist Church. At the age of four years old, I had the privilege to be a part of his early preschool years at the Community Improvement Council Inc. – Head Start Child Development Center. When Matthew Ferguson became a teenage, it was my honor for Matthew to trust and present me with the opportunity to be a part of his Right of Passage Weekend (ROPAW) at the Boys to Men Mentoring Network of Virginia (BTMVA) in Richmond, Virginia, which is under the direction of Mr. Steve Martin (<https://www.btmva.org/our-programs.html>). Although we aren't related by biological birth, I have known Matthew since he was three years old and my current relationship with Matthew is family and friendship.

I have known Matthew as a person of good moral character. I realize that might seem hard to believe, given the circumstances, but it's true nonetheless. I have known Matthew to be eager to learn with a determined mind to not give up in the face of adversity until he got it right. I have known Matthew to gets on well with all kinds of people. He doesn't meet a stranger. If he sees or senses an individual down spirited, he is quick to embrace the person with his arm, leans on the individual's shoulder, and speak a word of encouragement. Should a silly statement needing to be made to create laughter or a hopeful word from the Bible to lift one's spirit, you

can count on Matthew to be the voice for encouragement and positive energy. During his early teen years, Matthew displayed a "people first" trait among his church members. He was always willing to be a help to fellow church members. I have observed that hard work doesn't bother Matthew, especially if he knows it will help the elderly or it will give him the opportunity to demonstrate a difference made in the life of a younger person. Matthew was taught to be kind hearted. It was during Matthew's weekend at the Boys to Men mentoring program where I observed leadership skills demonstrated by Mathew. He was observed being honest to other young men between the ages of 12 and 18 about his personal struggles and negative impacts he endured for not listening to the wisdom of his grandmother. He demonstrated excellent delegation as he stood before many young men instructing them on how to face fearful activities with courage. One particular activity was that of the blind fold free fall. During the weekend of his initiation, Matthew demonstrated confidence and positive attitude as a team member among other young men and my interpretation was, "He wanted everybody to succeed." I have seen Matthew go through ups and downs, struggle with adjusting to deaths of male figures in his home, which negatively impacted his life and leaving him without a father for proper guidance, and too soon to be recruited by gang members presenting false fatherhood traits, but all the while I have been convinced that Matthew is a decent person at the core. He just needed more positive male figures in his life and people to believe in him and guide him rightly so that he can become the person I know he can be.

Matthew has made mistakes, and I believe he is incredibly remorseful, and is willing to do whatever it takes to make reparations, financially and emotionally, if possible. But to do that, he needs you to understand the negative variables that impacted his life before he had the opportunity to grown into the man deemed as productive by society. I recognize that Matthew is guilty of his crime, and I do not believe that he should get off without punishment for violating another's individual's rights by willfully breaking the law. I just hope you will recognize the power you wield with regard to the future of this young man, and make a fair decision.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rev. Ronald Lee Pridgen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Ronald Lee Pridgen

TO: Honorable Michael F. Urbanski

July 1, 2020

United States District Judge

Dear Judge Urbanski

My name is Alger E. Robbins, former Mental Health Counselor and Tutor for Matthew C. Ferguson for a total of 7 years. I have known Mathew from birth until the present time. I became an In-Home Counselor and Tutor to Matthew when he attended Edwin A. Gibson Middle School here in Danville, Virginia his 7th and 8th grade years from 2008-2011.

I had the opportunity to continue counseling and tutoring Matthew for part of his 9th grade at George Washington High School 2011-2012 school years until he was expelled from GWHS. After leaving GWHS, Matthew attended the Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy in Virginia Beach, Virginia for 6 months from December 2012-June 2013. While attending the Commonwealth Challenge Youth Academy I had the opportunity to counsel and tutor Matthew on his home visits. Matthew completed his GED and graduation ceremony and received many outstanding awards while attending the program in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

After completing his GED and graduation ceremony Matthew returned back to Danville at the end of June 2013. He enrolled at Danville Community College in the Fall, August 2013 majoring in Liberal Arts. I started back counseling and tutoring Matthew from August 2013 to October 2013. While attending DCC he started out being a good student. His strong subjects was Math and Report Writing. Matthew was a great speaker and knew how to challenge himself very well. He had improved his motivational skills and knowledge developmental skills. Matthew lost sight with his studies after 2 months at DCC hanging in the streets with the wrong friends and he lost sight on his class work. I truly enjoyed working with Matthew for 7 long years.

It was a pleasure to write this Character Letter for Matthew C. Ferguson. I am glad that I was a part of his life and I bid him God speed.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alger E. Robbins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Alger E. Robbins

Mental Health Counselor, AS, BS

Angela Ferguson

[REDACTED]
Danville, VA [REDACTED]

The Honorable Michael F. Urbanski
United States District Judge
700 E. Broad Street, Suite 3600
Richmond, Virginia 23219

July 7, 2020

Dear Honorable Judge Michael F. Urbanski,

My name is Angela Ferguson, Direct Support Specialist for the Intellectual Disability. I am the Aunt (his mother's sister) of Matthew C. Ferguson I have known him for the entire 24 years of his life. I appreciate the opportunity to write this character letter regarding Matthew C. Ferguson. I believe that Matthew has always yearn for love that he was not receiving from his biological mother and father. Therefore, I have always shown him the love that he so desire, I understood his pain he had to endure. They failed, rejected, denied, and abandoned him. I talked to Matthew C. Ferguson plenty of times, even after my mother and father began raising him, he still longed for the love of his parents. Shortly after my father died, when Matthew was only three years old; my mother who was 63 years old widower who began raising Matthew. My siblings and I did the best we could to assist my mother with supporting and providing for him.

During his early formative years when a child needed relationship building skills, structure, guidance, and bonding from his parents he did not receive the assistance he needed. Instead he was prescribed medications due to his mother's substance abuse to help him maintain what he could consider a normal life. Being a Subject Matter Expert (SME), trained and certified to assist individuals with Intellectual Disability I understand that this is a critical time in a child's life. In addition, a boy needs a father to help him to deal with peer pressure and other things a boy need. Matthew was a smart, talented, creative young man, as well as naive and vulnerable. He hankers to be accepted by others even those who were not model citizens in the neighborhood.

I feel that Matthew is an honest, law-abiding citizen, until he became involved with the wrong crowd. Not merely because he is my nephew, but because the mannerism and the way he conducted himself in front of the elders in the church and in the community. His problems did not begin until he began skipping school and breaking curfew. That is when he was sent to the Commonwealth Challenge Academy Program to learn some discipline and structure. I am truly proud of his accomplishments, especially after he manage to complete the Commonwealth Challenge Academy Program and the Individual Education Program (IEP). In fact, he was on WSET News Station because he was doing such a great job mentoring the children in the neighborhood, encouraging them not to become part of a gang. Despite the minor mishaps he encountered with the law, Matthew was highly active in the church. He was praise dancing,

ushering, playing the drums, along with mentoring school children at the church. He attended Danville Community College and various mentoring programs.

After being incarcerated for Probation Violation, upon his release he seemed to wise up and was headed in the right direction. He began working for McCarthy Construction Company. Matthew is sensitive, loving, and well-liked. I understand that there is no excuse for what he has done I pray every day that God will forgive him and that you (Your Honor) will grant him mercy and give him another chance at turning his life around. I understand that for change to come an individual must want to make a change. I believe that Matthew wants to turn his life around.

He has shown me how remorseful he is for his wrongdoing and the pain and suffering he has caused his family and all the families involved. Please allow him to re-enter society and be the role model and the law biding citizen that we all know he can be. My prayer is that my mother who is 87 years old will be able to see Matthew come home and be the young man God called him to be. I believe in my heart that Matthew will not go astray again. By now I am sure Matthew knows that being incarcerated is not just a physical lock up but a mental and emotional one, with Rehabilitation and Resources, he will be changed young man.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela Ferguson". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end of the name.

Angela Ferguson

To: The Honorable Michael F. Urbanski
Concerning Mr. Matthew Ferguson

My name is Carol Dixon and I am a fellow member of Bennett Memorial Baptist church with Mr. Matthew Ferguson. We did many church activities together such as: praise dancing, singing in the church choir, and ushering. To be exact he was my usher president for 2 years or more. Mr. Ferguson has always been a nice, humble, young man who loves the lord. I remember seeing him on Sundays with his grandmother preparing the church for morning worship with a big smile and warm hug. One of my favorite memories of Mr. Ferguson was when he refereed a community basketball game which involved many youth of the Danville community. I would say others and myself consider Mr. Ferguson very respectful to those in high authority. He was unfortunately not doing his God destined work, and was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Also him being with the wrong people was a huge mistake he made. I feel like everyone deserves a second chance, including Mr. Ferguson. He's made mistakes in his life just like anyone else in the world. I hope his honesty, and courage help him through this time in his life. I ask of you to please be tranquil with your big decision and job your having to do.

Sincerely,
Carol L. Dixon
on behalf of Mr. Matthew Ferguson

July 13, 2020

Honorable Michael F. Urbanski
United States District Judge

Dear Honorable Michael F. Urbanski:

My name is Cathy H. Millner and I'm writing this character letter on behalf of **Matthew Ferguson**(affectionately called "**MC**").

I've been a Real Estate Agent in the City of Danville, VA for approximately twenty eight Plus years. Shortly after moving to Danville, VA I joined and became a very active member of Bennett Memorial Missionary Baptist Church where I had the good fortune of meeting and fellowshiping with the Ferguson family and we are still active members. **Matthew "MC"** was born into the Ferguson family(Matthew and Jessie Ferguson's grandson) a few years later.

I have known **Matthew "MC"** his entire life. He was reared in a loving and Christian home.

At a very young age **Matthew "MC"** was involved in preschool and youth activities of the church. He progressed very well. I taught him in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School.

I remember **Matthew "MC"** always being loving, kind and respectful to me; always giving me hugs; if I was caring books or large book bags, he always offered to carry them for me. He always said yes ma'am and no ma'am, even after he was a grown man.

Even today, it's hard to think that he would commit any acts that violate the law. He's a very talented musician and speaker. He used his talent to play the drums at different churches in the area. In all of the letters that I read from him; he was talking about GOD!!! Proverbs 18:16 says...A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

I do believe, if Matthew is given the opportunity to make a new start he'll prove to us that he's a "CHANGED MAN". If there's anything that I can do to help him; I'll do it simply because I think that whatever laws that he broke; he was coerced in doing so.

God Bless You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cathy H. Millner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end.

Lola J. King

Danville, VA

July 13, 2020

To the Honorable Judge Michael F. Urbanski

Re: Character Reference for Mr. Matthew Ferguson

I, Lola J. King, am a well-respected, veteran educator in the Danville Public Schools Division (36 years). I have been assigned many duties and I have served on a multitude of educational committees within my division; but my greatest duty is to educate America's future leaders to be great citizens, critical thinkers, and life-long learners. Of these 36 years in the field of education, I have had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Matthew Ferguson for 24 years. Matthew's mother and I have been friends for over 50 years. I was also given the privilege of educating Matthew in Summer School at Schoolfield Elementary School in Danville, VA. He was very helpful, eager to learn, and concerned about the other students in the classroom- sometimes to the point that he did not finish his own work.

Previous to his incarceration, Matthew was an active participant in the Boy Scouts of America, he played various sports at George Washington High School (basketball and football), and he was an active member at Bennett Memorial Baptist Church (Youth Choir, Male Choir, Usher Board, Mlme Team member, Sunday School, Church sport teams). Matthew has always been very friendly, encouraging, and kind-hearted. He developed these skills after watching the patterns and habits of his deceased grandfather, Matthew Ferguson, Sr. Matthew Ferguson, Sr. was a great role model for his grandson and he strived to show him how to take care of and provide for your family. They had a great bond and when his grandfather transitioned to be with the Lord, Matthew did not have that positive, productive, male role model anymore. He was left to be raised by a very loving grandmother who kept him active in a lot of church and civic activities. Matthew was enticed and "taken" into a world of people that he perceived to be his "friends". This world provided youthful excitement for Matthew. Matthew enjoyed the acceptance of his peers. Peer pressure set in and Matthew was taken in like a fish to water and began spiraling into a world he WAS NOT raised to function within. Even within this world, Matthew knew that some of the things that he did were NOT a part of his upbringing and he discussed his remorsefulness for these things later on in life.

I can confirm that Matthew, since his incarceration, has developed great integrity, more self control, greater soul-searching thinking skills, a closer relationship with his family, and is fulfilling God's purpose in his life. Matthew is a good person, but he has made some bad choices, in the name of friendship and acceptance and now must pay the cost for his bad choices. In closing, I am aware of Matthew's offence, but I am still happy to describe Matthew as someone of good character. If further information is needed, please contact me at (434) 203-7051.

Yours sincerely,

Lola J. King

Lola J. King

Delores S. Hairston

[REDACTED]
Danville, VA [REDACTED]

July 13, 2020

To the Honorable Judge Michael F. Urbanski

Re: Character Reference for Mr. Matthew Ferguson

My name is Delores Smith Hairston, I'm writing on behalf of Matthew Ferguson-a client of yours and a nephew of mine. He calls me "Auntie" and I proudly accept it. I've known Matthew from birth. His family and I are very close. I have retired from the Danville Public Schools Division, where I worked diligently for 29 years as a teacher's assistant. I have lived in Danville, VA all of my 85 years. I am of the Baptist Faith and I do believe in Christ in the free pardon of sins. Matthew's family and I belong to the same church family-the Bennett Memorial Baptist Church. Matthew helped his grandfather to keep our church clean, also. After his grandfather passed, Matthew struggled to understand why his grandfather left him and I tried to help him understand why to the best of my ability. He would ask, "When is he coming back? Why did my Papa leave me? Is he gone church?" Be mindful that this language is the language of a three years young child. His grandfather would take him everywhere with him, he was his grandfather's shadow. Matthew loved hugging and greeting his brothers and sisters in Christ each Sunday and often worried if he missed someone. If he "thought" he missed someone during the service, he would give the same warm reception after each church service.

I am not used to calling Matthew "Matthew". I have known him lovingly for over 24 years as "M.C." I hope that you do not mind me addressing him as M.C. hereafter. I pray for M.C. daily and I love him even in the midst of his trials and tests of life. It's hard for me to do this character reference because I would want M.C. to be here with me to love, guide, and protect him; but because of some bad choices right now, this would not be possible.

Some character traits I know about M.C. are the following: he has great manners, he is kind, respectful, trustworthy, honest, loyal, generous, and a hard worker. M.C. had goals of joining the Army and purchasing himself a car. M.C. was honest, law-abiding, generous, helpful, and has always had an ambition to better himself. During his High School years, M.C. attended many extracurricular activities with me and he was very helpful. He loved sports. He also helped me with my responsibilities in the Voters League in Danville, VA. M.C. went with me to pass out pamphlets and knocking on doors asking citizens to register to vote. He aspired to be civic minded later on in life.

M.C. is a friendly and polite person who has made some bad choices and now must be punished for his actions accordingly. I pray that you will sentence him at the lower tier of the sentencing guidelines range. I love my nephew to infinity!!

Sincerely yours,

Delores S. Hairston

Delores S. Hairston or M.C.'s "Auntie"

To: The Honorable Michael F. Urbanski
Concerning Mr. Matthew Ferguson

My name is Carol Dixon and I am a fellow member of Bennett Memorial Baptist church with Mr. Matthew Ferguson. We did many church activities together such as: praise dancing, singing in the church choir, and ushering. To be exact he was my usher president for 2 years or more. Mr. Ferguson has always been a nice, humble, young man who loves the lord. I remember seeing him on Sundays with his grandmother preparing the church for morning worship with a big smile and warm hug. One of my favorite memories of Mr. Ferguson was when he refereed a community basketball game which involved many youth of the Danville community. I would say others and myself consider Mr. Ferguson very respectful to those in high authority. He was unfortunately not doing his God destined work, and was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Also him being with the wrong people was a huge mistake he made. I feel like everyone deserves a second chance, including Mr. Ferguson. He's made mistakes in his life just like anyone else in the world. I hope his honesty, and courage help him through this time in his life. I ask of you to please be tranquil with your big decision and job you're having to do.

Sincerely,
Carol L. Dixon
on behalf of Mr. Matthew Ferguson

Jessie Ferguson

[REDACTED]
Danville, VA [REDACTED]

The Honorable Michael F. Urbanski
United States District Judge
700 E. Broad Street, Suite 3600
Richmond, Virginia 23219

July 7, 2020

Dear Honorable Judge Michael F. Urbanski,

My name is Jessie Ferguson. I am the grandmother and the legal guardian of Matthew C. Ferguson. I am writing you this character letter regarding Matthew C. Ferguson. I have been the caretaker of Mr. Ferguson his entire life due the substance abuse of his mother, which cause Matthew to be substance abuse candidate to maintain a normal life. Upon the release of Matthew from the hospital shortly after his birth. The doctor advised Matthew Ferguson Sr, (my husband) and I that Matthew C. Ferguson had been through a dramatic ordeal due to the substance abuse of his mother that required him to be dependent upon medications, therefore they could only release him to us.

Matthew Ferguson Sr, (my husband) and I raised Matthew C. Ferguson until my husband died on December 31, 1999. After which I had to take on the responsibility of raising Matthew C. Ferguson as a widow. Because his biological mother refuse to sign the adoption papers. I had to endure numerous encounters with the Danville Social Service and the Danville Court Judicial System for approximately two years before Matthew C. Ferguson adoption was finalized in August of 2001, which allowed me to become financially stable to provide for him by allowing him to receive benefits for the Social Security Administration from my late husband.

Noticing the change in Matthew's behavior. I immediately knew that something needed to be done, so, I made an appointment with Dr. Richard Bindewald, PhD, LCP, through the Mental Health Services for Matthew to be assessed for Mental Health. After the Assessment was completed it was determined that Matthew has a Psychological Mental Health Disorder, therefore, he needed additional assistance. He then was assigned to Counseling with Mr. Alger E. Robbins, AS, BS, of Allcare Family Services through Danville/ Pittsylvania Mental Health Service Association. In addition, Matthew has numerous mentors to help him with his Psychological Mental Health Disorder, such as, Rev. Clarence Hairston Jr., Rev. Jerome Coleman, Rev. Ron Pridgen, and Mr. Warren Fowler. Matthew C. Ferguson was active in many local organizations, for example the Individual Education Program (IEP), Boy Scouts, Commonwealth Challenge Academy Program, Playing the musical instrument for various churches along with singing in the Bennett Memorial Baptist Church Youth Choir were he resides as a member.

I genuinely believe that Matthew C. Ferguson is remorseful for his wrong doings. He is a well-liked young man. He has a good report with the individuals in the neighborhood. He has apologized several times how sorry he is during our conversations while he has been incarcerated. He is a loving caring young man who loves people and would give you the shirt off his back if you asked for it. Moreover, he was helping a young single mother to make sure she had enough food for her baby. I understand that he needs to pay for the wrong he has done. All I am asking is that you grant him mercy. He is young and still has time to turn his life around and be an example to the young boys in the neighborhood who seem to be headed down the wrong path. I believe he can be a law-abiding citizen. Just before he was comprehended by the Danville Police Department Matthew has obtained a position with McCarthy Building Companies, Inc, where he had good work habits. It is in his heart to do the right thing.

Sincerely,

Jessie Ferguson

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jessie Ferguson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "F" and "J".

Ms. Kay George
Chamberland

Honorable Michael F. Urbanski,
United States District Judge

Your Honor, my name is Ms. Kay F. George, I am a Danvillian, moved to New York, went to College, had two girls, moved back to Danville with my husband and two girls. I was a Supervisor for this company in Manhattan and a Piano player on Sundays. Weekend Drills with Army Reserve, National Guard and U.S. Army total 32 years.

Well, we moved back to Danville. I went back to College so my daughters could see me with my pack pack on my back. I had to send out a message. They got it too. Both went to college.

He then got to know Matthew Ferguson, little boy that ^{was} so friendly to everyone in and out of church. We've known him since he was about 4 to 5 years old. He would walk past my mother's house with his grandfather going to clean the church. He came to Sunday school every Sunday. He was doing really good in school. He worked with kids in a program for boys and girls as contribution to the community.

Thanking you in
advance
Ray Henry

I think Matthew has a good
personality and a good reputation.
He is well liked because of his
"humane" it was a kind fellow,
played piano for the church
played on youth Sunday and when
he had a job he did it well. M.C.
was that all call him, he was
very concerned and thoughtful of others.
I share an opinion and I know M.C.
has experienced a mistake and how
for being with the wrong people at
the wrong time, I'm sure that he
won't think about the need to
be more as not straight. There is a
course called failure, a loop called
"Confusion, Road Bump, called "Grind"
red light call make, caution light
called family. Many people will
make you have late call. Please
help M.C. He is a good boy and I know
he will be around people that doing
right and have a good determination
and engine called "insurance",
called father, and a driver called "leave"
He would be making it to a place
called success.

July 8th 2020

To Honorable Michael F. Urbanski
United States District Judge

I am Min Mattie Jones an associate minister at Bennett Memorial Bapts. Church, where I meet Matthew Ferguson through his Grandmother Sis Jessie Ferguson.

I've known Matthew since 2001 when I retired and moved back to Danville, Va.

He was a active member of Sunday School & Youth Choir at Bennett Memorial Church.

His Grandmother & Aunt keep me updated on his well being.

I think I know Matthew pretty well. Matthew was respectful and always helping seniors if they needed it.

Matthew is well liked by many that I know.

I attribute certain foolishities to Matthew because I know Sis Jessie Ferguson taught him right from wrong, and he did not give up on the Church.

Sincerely,
Min Mattie Jones

June 23, 2020

Mrs. Beverly Clements

[REDACTED]
Danville, VA [REDACTED]

TO WHOM IT May Concern:

My name is Mrs. Beverly Clements of Danville, VA. I am writing this letter for your client, Matthew Ferguson. As I began to think about Matthew, also known as, "M.C." I think about little or young guy singing in the Male Chorus & later growing up sitting over by the drums at our church, "Bennett Memorial Baptist Church". I remember him coming to church dressed in his white button up shirt with a black tie, black pants, black socks, & black shoes. Coming to church to use his gifts by playing the drums. To know & (and) hear that Matthew has been charged in federal court, breaks my heart. I don't know if Matthew Ferguson committed the crime, but I am asking if he did, I ask you beg him Pardon. I do know Right is Right and Wrong is Wrong. And when you do wrong, there is a price to pay. But, please beg him Pardon. I am reminded of the story in the Holy Bible in Acts 16:23-33,

When Paul and Silas were locked in prison. How they did them, what they were charged with and the outcome.

M.C. - I just want to tell you no matter what we still love you, but God loves you more and the best. Remember, Jesus the man that created & formed you in your mother's womb. Remember Psalm 121: "LOOK to the hills from whence cometh your help." Keep praying and trusting GOD!!


Thank you Judge & whomever else is reading this letter. *God is a God of a second chance*. Thank you

Sincerely,
Mrs. Beverly Clements

To Whom it may concern:

My name is Minister KeAunté Clements. I am now a resident of Danville, VA since 2013, after I married my wife, and in the process of meeting her family & friends, I had the pleasure of meeting Matthew Ferguson, at the Bennett Memorial Missionary Baptist Church, where I was the Minister of Music and now currently resides as a full time member. Every time I would see Matthew, whether it be church or in the store, he was always an excellent and respectful young man towards my family and I. Matthew reminds me of The Prodigal Son in the Bible, Luke 15:11-24. The Prodigal Son wanted to leave his father's house so one day he asked his father for his share of his inheritance. The father gave him his portion and the son left home and went out into the world, having himself a good time. While the son was away from home spending all of his money, suddenly a famine came and the son had no money and no food to eat. Things got so bad that the son started working for a citizen of that famined country feeding pigs and the son wanted to eat the slop that the pigs ate because no one would help him. He thought about what he did and he said to himself, "I'm going back to my father's house and ask him to forgive me." On his way home the father saw him coming down the road and the father ran and kissed him, and forgive him and welcomed him home. I understand that when you do something wrong, there's a price to pay, but I am asking that you would have a little mercy on Matthew Ferguson just like our Heavenly Father has mercy on us when we do wrong.

Thank you for your time,

Minister KeAunté Clements 

July 1, 2020

To Whom It May Concern

I, Nellie S. Bolton who is a member of Bennett Memorial Missionary Baptist Church for 21 years have known Mr. Ferguson since he was born and became a member of Bennett Memorial Missionary Baptist Church. Where he play The drums, song in Young Adult Choir and was a usher on the usher board, he also dance on The Male Praise Dance. I have known The Ferguson's Family for 30 years. Mr. Ferguson has been a working force with in the church since he was a child.

My relationship Mr. Ferguson is through our belief in Christianity. Through his works of faith in the church, I feel Mr. Ferguson could be a formal leader and a positive example for the youth of our community.

Yours Truly,
Nellie S. Bolton

Bennett Memorial Missionary Baptist Church

165 Levelton Street • Danville, Virginia 24541
Church Phone: 434-793-0092 • Pastor's Line: 434-797-1223
Pastor: Rev. Clarence Hairston, Jr. Phone: 434-799-0965

June 16, 2020

*The Honorable Michael F. Urbanski,
United States District Judge*

My name is Clarence Hairston, Jr., I'm writing this character letter in behalf of Matthew Ferguson, better known as "MC". I am currently serving as Sr. Pastor of The Bennett Memorial Missionary Baptist Church, 165 Levelton Street, Danville, VA 24541. This is my Home Church.

I've known Matthew his entire life. I baptized him at an early age. He was enrolled in The New Members Orientation Class which was a requirement for all new members. Matthew completed this class and received a Certificate. Matthew was brought up in a Christian home and his family kept him involved in as many activities as they could, such as Morning Worship, Sunday School and the Jr. Ushers. He sang with the Bennett Memorial Male Chorus, these were adult men, but that was his choice and the family desired to Keep him happy.

As long as I've known Matthew, he's been honest, but he got mixed with the wrong crowd and started to drift, of course, we noticed, and couldn't stop the downward trend. He got in trouble with the Feds. He wrote me a letter expressing his sorrow and his mistakes and asked for prayer. We prayed much for him and we're still praying for him.

I personally don't know the nature of his offense, but I do know and believe what the Holy Scriptures Teach. In the Book of Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it".

Matthew is now 24 years of age and he still has a chance to get his life back on track and become a productive citizen. He had the Righteous upbringing. I believe he will return to it.

God's Blessings,

Clarence Hairston Jr.
Pastor Clarence Hairston, Jr.

Honorable Michael F. Urbanski

July 1, 2020

United States District Judge

Dear Judge Urbanski

My name is Sheila L. Ferguson, Aunt to Matthew Ferguson. I am writing this character letter on behalf of Matthew Ferguson.

I have known Matthew his entire life. Being his oldest Aunt, Matthew has always looked up to me as a positive role model in which he could talk to me about any given situations. Matthew was always a sweet and loveable kind person. Whenever he got in trouble he would come to my home to discuss what was going on with him and I would listen and try to help him solve whatever problems it was. I would tell Matthew that the street was not offering him anything neither was the bad friends he would socialize with.

Matthew at times had a mind of his own but I would encourage Matthew to look for positive solutions to be able to face obstacles that was facing him in the wrong way.

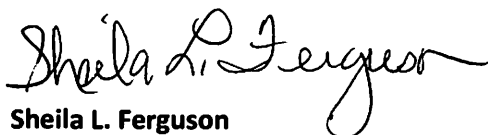
I felt that Matthew problem was that he knew the type of life his mother was going through and that really bother him a lot with his mother being on drugs, He felt confused about it and that his mother was not too much involve in his life. I felt that this caused a lot of problems that went on in his life in making bad decisions.

Overall Matthew had a good life been raised by my parents, a aunt, uncle and several close cousins. We all were a great Role Model to Matthew. Matthew was brought up in church, playing the drums and involved in many youth activities. He was a follower and not a leader when it came to peer-pressure.

When Matthew got out of jail the first time he started going back to church and became a role model to the youth in church. He even got a job and had start saving money. But along the way Matthew start hanging back in the street hanging with the wrong crowd and trouble found him.

In closing, Matthew has never been a bad person and I feel that with more counseling and prayer he can change his life to become a better person and moved back into society with a positive outlook on things. We all have made bad choices in life but with Matthew with motivation and knowledge developmental skills Matthew can change his life to become a better person.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheila L. Ferguson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sheila L. Ferguson

June 29, 2020

Honorable Michael F. Urbanski
United States District Judge
c/o Mary E. Maguire, Assistant Federal Public Defender
Office of the Federal Public Defender
701 E. Broad Street; Suite 3600
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Judge Urbanski,

My name is Warren J. Fowler; a current employee of the Danville Public Schools as a Student Support Specialist; an advocate for the youth within the Alternative Program. I am writing this character letter in reference to Matthew Ferguson; affectionately known as "MC".

Reared by his loving maternal grandmother, MC has always been around positive supportive family and friends, whom he appeared to love and they too loved him.

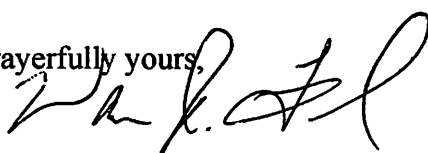
I have personally known MC since he was a middle school student, as a friend and a mentor; watching him grow up and participating in a variety of positive programs within in the Danville community; in addition to being a member of the same church.

Throughout his younger years, MC was an excellent athlete and I was sure that he would obtain a scholarship towards football and/or basketball.

MC a jovial young man was mischievous like most of us as young men. I observed MC as a positive role model for the youth that attended our church; however, it is believed that he was negatively influenced by peer pressure. Often doing things and getting in trouble, MC has always been able to recover and it was thought that due to his remorseful request for forgiveness that he learned from his mistakes.

We, the community and the Laymen of the church continue to pray for MC's future and feels that he is again remorseful for any mistakes that he has made knowingly and unknowingly.

Prayerfully yours,



Warren J. Fowler

To: Honorable Michael F. Urbanski, United States District Judge

Hey my name is Michael Ferguson Sr., I am Matthew's uncle. I have been an educator for over 36 years in the public education system in the following roles; (teacher, coach, principal). I have known Matthew his entire life, and witnessed my parents raising him since birth, due to unfortunate circumstances and behaviors by my sister. Matthew's mother was addicted to drugs during her pregnancy and he struggled with impulsive behaviors including ADHD. I believe Matthew's biological parental absence of love and support contributed to his need to seek attention that were often provoked by negative impulsive decisions like injecting in adult conversations, engaging in with peers who were making bad decisions or simply just disregarding morals and values that were instilled at home.

When he started school he was a respectful student to the adults in the building; however, he got in trouble trying to gain attention or impress his peers in order to be liked. These types of behaviors resulted in some discipline actions received throughout his schooling which ultimately caused him to be removed from sport teams. As a result of this removal from sports, his foundation outside of the home was shattered causing him to lose additional guidance, support, encouragement and discipline. I would often get phone calls from my mom and sisters about his behaviors and choices outside of the home. This would often cause me to drive to Danville and often have a heart to heart conversation with him about making better choices. He would be very apologetic and stress how hurt he was for disappointing me.

Supporting my parents rearing Matthew, I would often bring him along with my kids on vacations providing experiences and ensuring love as well as showing he is valued and appreciated. He has always been a fun loving young man, who spent a lot of his time in the church playing drums and praising the Lord. He is a very respectable person and is loved by everyone in the church and community. I know he spent some time in the area talking with youth about staying out of trouble and making positive choices to prevent them from making some of the negative choices he encountered. He is well liked by everyone in the neighborhood and a delightful person to be around. He is a young man that has character and values; however, he has shown a tendency to waiver from morality and what he knows to be right to be accepted by his peers.

As his uncle and someone who loves him, I am very disappointed with some of the behaviors and choices he has made as a young teen; however, I believe if given an opportunity he would readily give back to his community by being a positive leader and mentor for others who might be faced with some of the same challenges that landed him in the correctional system. I know he is remorseful for the things he has been charged with and wants nothing more than to find a way to correct his wrong. Since incarceration I'm in consistent communication with Matthew. I am confident knowing he has benefited from being rehabilitated utilizing proper resources and can identify his needs and ability to be a successful citizen. The dialogue we have consistently had shows Matthew has matured and accepted accountability for his actions. He expresses with me often on the phone that he's looking forward to learning a trade/skill to be a productive contributor in society.

Thanks you for your consideration in this matter;
Michael L Ferguson